

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH  
STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND THE SELECTED VARIABLES  
OF JOB SATISFACTION, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT,  
AND THE INTENT TO REMAIN WITH AN ORGANIZATION

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By

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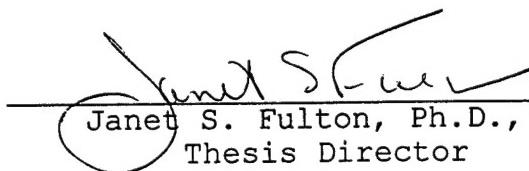
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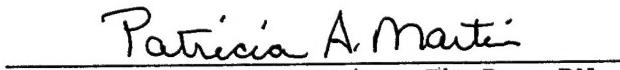
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Jerry R. Harvey ENTITLED The Relationship Between Perceived Satisfaction with Staff Development Activities and the Selected Variables of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and the Intent to Remain with an Organization BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Science.

  
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## ABSTRACT

Harvey, Jerry R. M.S., College of Nursing and Health, Wright State University, 1999. The Relationship Between Perceived Satisfaction With Staff Development Activities and the Selected Variables of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and the Intent to Remain With an Organization.

The military nurse serves in the dual role of nurse and officer creating a unique perspective of professional development. Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between satisfaction with staff development activities and the selected variables of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain in an organization. The purpose of this study has been to explore these relationships in a military nurse population. Five questions were asked in this research. What is the perceived level of satisfaction with staff development activities among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center? What is the level of organizational commitment of staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? What is the level of overall job satisfaction among staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? What is the level of intent to remain among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center? What is the relationship between the perceived level of satisfaction with staff development activities and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, (c) intent to remain, and (d) selected demographic variables among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?

The theoretical framework of this research is based on Herzberg's theory of

motivation. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with an organization are conceptualized as the intermediate variables linking the perception of staff development and nurse retention. During monthly nursing unit staff meetings at a Midwest regional Air Force medical center 50 staff nurses from three different inpatient units completed a questionnaire comprised of the *Satisfaction with Educational Opportunity Scale*, the *Job Description Index*, and the *Intent to Remain Scale*. The majority of participant scores indicated that they had a slightly positive perception of staff development opportunity, a moderately positive perception of organizational commitment, and a positive perception of job satisfaction. Participants intent to remain scores were fairly evenly spread across the scale. Only three factors were found to influence the educational opportunity scores. Overall job satisfaction demonstrated a positive relationship with educational opportunity ( $p = 0.0001$ ). The intent to remain demonstrated a negative relationship with educational opportunity ( $p = 0.0075$ ). The number of years experience demonstrated a negative relationship with educational opportunity ( $p = 0.0043$ ). These findings suggest that satisfaction with staff development activities may be a better indicator of job satisfaction than organizational commitment for this population. The negative relationship between educational opportunity and the intent to remain may reflect the population's satisfaction as a nurse but not as a military member. The military nursing staff development officer may need to find new ways to develop the more experienced nurse. More than a good orientation and basic training are needed to keep the experienced nurse vitalized.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Nurse retention is both a cost and a quality issue for health care organizations. High turnover rates result in increased costs associated with recruitment, hiring, orientation, vacancies, and termination. The approximate range of turnover costs to replace one registered nurse has been estimated to be between \$6,000 and 15,000 (Jones, 1990). Also, new staff are more apt to make errors and take longer to perform procedures resulting in decreased productivity and quality of nursing care (Jones, 1990).

Many variables influence nurse retention. One of the most frequently cited reasons nurses remain with an organization is the opportunity for staff development (Cassandra et al., 1994). Although the relationship between nursing staff development and staff retention is theoretically defendable, multiple intervening and confounding variables are present. These confounding variables create challenges in scientifically explicating the relationship between staff development and retention. Three variables frequently associated with retention are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with an organization (Mowdy et al., 1979; Smith et al., 1969; and Price & Mueller, 1981). These three variables may be described as intermediate variables that influence the relationship between nursing staff development and nurse retention. Several researchers have explored the relationship between staff development and

the intermediate variables of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain with an organization (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra et al., 1994). Findings suggested that satisfaction with staff development has been positively correlated with job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and intent to remain at that organization. Nurse retention can be conceptualized as being influenced by staff development activities because staff development opportunities have been demonstrated to increase job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with an organization (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra et al., 1994).

Commitment has repeatedly been associated with retention. Nurses have multiple commitments. These commitments include professional, organizational, job, patient, and personal commitments (Corley & Mauksch, 1993). These commitments are even more complex for the military nurse. Core tenants of the military officer's oath include duty, honor, and service. The varying degrees of obligation and commitment military nurses experiences may influence their perception of professional development. Professional commitment in nursing is the alignment of a nurse with the values important to the profession of nursing (Corley & Mauksch, 1993). Professional commitment for the officer is the alignment with the values important to the military branch of service s/he is associated with: The Army, Air Force, or Navy. The two alignments may sometimes be incongruent creating conflicting perceptions regarding professional development for the military nurse. Example: If a nursing course and an officer training course are being offered at the same time, and the military nurse was

ordered to go to the officer course, then how does the nurse resolve this conflict without viewing it as an infringement of his/her professional development?

This chapter describes the need for research in the area of nursing staff development for the military nurse. The headings to be reviewed include the research problem, significance and justification, purpose statement, research questions, definitions of variables, and a summary of the chapter in sequential order.

### Research Problem

Previous studies (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra et. al, 1994) have demonstrated positive correlations among high levels of satisfaction with staff development opportunities and a) job satisfaction, b) organizational commitment, and c) the intent to remain at an organization. Each of these two previous studies was conducted using a civilian nurse population. No study to date has explored these relationships in a population of active duty military nurses. The military nurse population serves in a dual role of nurse and officer creating a unique perspective of professional development different than civilian nurse populations.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between perceived satisfaction with nursing staff development activities and the selected variables of self reported job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the

intent to remain in the Air Force among active duty Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest regional medical center.

### Research Questions

1. What is the perceived level of satisfaction with staff development activities among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?
2. What is the level of organizational commitment of staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center?
3. What is the level of overall job satisfaction among staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center?
4. What is the level of intent to remain among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?
5. What is the relationship between the perceived level of satisfaction with staff development activities and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, (c) intent to remain, and (d) selected demographic variables among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?

### Significance and Justification

Nursing staff development plays a critical role in the recruitment, development, and retention of nurses. Also, nursing staff development fosters nurses' professional growth and promotes job satisfaction. Other key areas in

which nursing staff development impacts an organization include the setting of standards and the evaluation of competencies (ANA, 1990).

The staff development department must justify costs by showing the product they provide is valuable to the organization. The costs associated with maintaining an internal staff development department include the salaries of the educators, educational materials, and substantial indirect costs associated with staff absence during educational activities (Kirsch, 1990). To compete with other departmental budget funding, the money spent on the staff development process must be shown as vital for the organization.

One way to show that staff development activities are essential to the organization is to explore the relationship between staff development and nurse retention. In this research, the relationship between staff development and retention is being studied indirectly by exploring the relationship between staff development and the intermediate variables of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain with an organization.

Many of the antecedents that directly or indirectly create job satisfaction and employee commitment are associated with the staff development process. One part of the organization's characteristics that directly impact an individual's satisfaction and level of commitment is the structure and culture of an organization's orientation. Personal characteristics that affect an individual's satisfaction and level of commitment include their expectations of continuing education experiences provided by the organization. The selection for training is a management team practice that also impacts the employee's satisfaction and

level of commitment. Finally, environmental conditions such as compensation for educational activities also effect satisfaction and level of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1996).

Each of the components of staff development (orientation, inservice education, and continuing education) are in part antecedents of the process of promoting employee satisfaction and commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1996). Organizational commitment in turn results in productivity, employee well-being, and retention.

### Definition of the Variables

*Staff development activities* are those activities that, by their nature, are part of the staff development process and include hospital/unit orientation, in-service education, and continuing education activities (ANA, 1990). Operationally, for the purpose of this study, staff development activities are all of the above mentioned in the order of priority that each individual staff nurse views as most important to fulfilling his/her job and to grow professionally. Staff development activities are components of the *Perception of Educational Opportunity Scale*.

*Organizational Commitment* is pledging one's self to a position or function. Commonly used terms to describe commitment are allegiance, loyalty, and attachment. For the purpose of this study, the Meyers and Allen (1996) operational definition of organizational commitment will be used. Organizational commitment therefore is a psychological state that reflects an employee's

relationship with an organization and has implications regarding intent to remain at that organization. There are three basic components or types of organizational commitment. These components are affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment. Continuance commitment is an awareness of the costs associated with leaving an organization. Normative commitment is feeling obligated to an organization. Organizational commitment is measured by the *Organizational Commitment Scale*.

*Job Satisfaction* is defined as the feelings an employee has about the job in general. Job satisfaction is a global concept and includes many aspects associated with work, supervision, conditions, pay, opportunity, and practices of the organization (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1975). Job satisfaction will be measured using the *Job Description Index*.

*Intent to remain* is the likelihood perceived by the individual of continued participation in the organization (Price & Mueller, 1981). The intent to remain will be measured by using a two question *Intent to Stay Questionnaire* from Price & Mueller, pg. 10 (1981).

## Summary

The relationship between satisfaction with staff development opportunity and nurse retention has three identified intermediate variables linking them. These three intermediate variables are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain with an organization. By evaluating the

relationship between staff development satisfaction and the intermediate variables, the relationship between staff development satisfaction and nurse retention can be inferred. The implication of this study is to build upon the previous research of Kirsch (1990) using a unique and different population consisting of active duty Air Force staff nurses. Air Force nurses serve in the dual role of officer and nurse. This dual role creates the possibility for conflicting and unique perspectives regarding professional development different from civilian nurse populations used in similar studies.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review is to summarize and evaluate research regarding the concepts of staff nurses' satisfaction with educational opportunity, overall work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain in an organization. The relationship between these concepts was explored in a descriptive study by Kirsch (1990) and later in a replication study by Cassandra et al. (1994). Both studies utilized civilian populations and were based on the assumption that job satisfaction results in job retention, especially during times of nursing shortage.

Using a sample of staff nurses, Kirsch (1990) explored the relationship between hospital sponsored staff development and staff nurses' overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain in the organization. Four questionnaires were used in this study (The Job Description Index, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Intent to Remain Scale, and Perception of Hospital Educational Opportunity). The findings suggested that a significant relationship existed between satisfaction with educational opportunity and: a) organizational commitment, b) work satisfaction, c) intent to remain, d) age, and e) years of practice. The greatest correlational significance was between satisfaction with educational opportunity and organizational commitment. The correlation between educational opportunity and age/years of practice was

inverse; the older, more experienced nurses in the study responded more negatively towards educational opportunity.

Using a sample of pediatric staff nurses, Cassandra et. al (1994) further explored the relationships between job satisfaction, intent to remain in the organization, organizational commitment, and hospital sponsored educational opportunity. Findings were similar to the findings in the study by Kirsch (1990), however, the strongest positive correlation between variables in this study was between the perception of educational opportunities and job satisfaction. The correlation between perception of educational opportunities and organizational commitment was the second strongest. No significant correlation was seen between demographic variables (age and years of practice) and the perception of educational opportunity as was found by Kirsch (1990).

For this study, the population used were active duty Air Force nurses at a Midwest regional medical center. This study has been modeled after the study done by Kirsch (1990), however, the population of interest is uniquely different and will be discussed in chapter III.

### Perception of Educational Opportunity

The perception of educational opportunity can also be stated as nursing staff development opportunity. For the purpose of this research, it is important that educational opportunity be referred to as staff development activities. The Air Force offers professional military education opportunity which is distinctively different than nursing educational opportunities. To minimize confusion for the

participants, educational opportunity will be defined as nursing staff development opportunity.

Nursing staff development activities include in-service education, orientation, and continuing education. The American Nurses Association (ANA) supports learning activities that promote growth of the individual nurse, enhances competence, and activities that are based on the performance expectations of the employer. Nursing staff development activities foster both individual and organizational goals with the ultimate purpose of improving patient care. Nursing staff development activities are consistently cited as one of the top ten ways of improving nursing job satisfaction (ANA, 1990).

Orientation is "the means by which new staff members are introduced to the goals, policies, procedures, role expectations, physical facilities, and special services in a specific work setting" (ANA, 1990). Orientation is provided at the onset of employment and when there is a change in the roles and responsibilities of the nurse. Billie (1982) stated that orientation is induction education which is the introduction of new employees to a specific work setting, remedial education, or those activities which fill in the gaps left by nursing education programs and allows entry or re-entry into practice.

Inservice education activities are those activities that assist the nurse in acquiring, maintaining, or increasing competence in fulfilling the assigned responsibilities specific to the expectations of the employer. These activities are job specific. Inservice education refers to learning experiences that are provided

in the work setting for the purpose of helping staff perform their assigned functions (ANA, 1990).

Continuing education includes all systematically organized and planned efforts that are designed to maintain and improve the abilities of employees.

Examples of continuing education efforts include but are not limited to seminars, conferences, and college course work. A continuing educational experience includes expected outcomes, planned learning experiences, and methods of evaluation (Tobin, 1979).

Educational opportunity/staff development activities include those activities that benefit either the agency and/or the individual nurse in improving competency and/or growing professionally. These activities may be job or organization specific, or developed to promote individual/professional growth. Therefore, any activity the individual perceives as helping to improve their professional, individual, or organizational worth is considered an educational opportunity.

Small (1995) explored the attitudes of perioperative nurses toward participating in continuing education (CE) opportunities. The most frequently cited reason for attending CE opportunities was to increase the nurse's professional knowledge base. The second most frequently cited reason for attending continuing educational opportunities was to improve the quality of patient care.

Hogston (1995) evaluated the reasons nurses attend professional nursing education. The reasons most frequently cited by nurses as why they attended

continuing educational offerings were to improve quality of patient care, to improve their professional status, and because it was the right thing to do. The meaning of the concept “the right thing to do” was not explained by Hogston (1995).

### Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by multiple variables. Blegen (1993) researched the variables cited as most important to nurses' job satisfaction using a meta-analytical approach to measure the strength and consistency of relationships between job satisfaction and reoccurring associated variables. The major conclusion of the research was that no single variable, no matter how strongly associated, stands out as the single explanatory variable. Individual perception of job satisfaction resulted from a composite of many different variables that are dynamic and each have varying degrees of influence (Blegen, 1993).

Frederick Herzberg in his classic works in the field of management, developed a theory of job satisfaction based on motivator and avoidance needs (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg's theory is based on motivators or satisfiers that create an atmosphere in which employees are allowed to work efficiently.

Two basic sets of needs emerged from Herzberg's theory of motivation. The first set of needs was referred to as hygiene needs. These needs are animal in nature and are thought to be a result of a built-in drive to meet basic biological needs and avoid pain from the environment. An example of a hygiene need is the

biological need for food which makes it necessary to earn money, and therefore, money becomes a specific driving force in meeting the need for food. Hygiene needs in the industrial setting are the job environment. Those hygiene or environmental factors that influence attitudes include company policy, supervision, relationships, work conditions, salary, status and security (Herzberg et al., 1959).

The second set of needs described in Herzberg's theory are called motivators. These motivators relate to the uniquely human need to grow psychologically. These needs are discussed in terms of stimuli to help the individual achieve growth. Motivators in the industrial setting are job content. Those motivator or job content factors that influence attitudes include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth (Herzberg et al., 1959).

According to Herzberg, the needs of man are on two separate continuums as outlined in Figure 1. The opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction; the opposite of job dissatisfaction is no job dissatisfaction. Therefore, the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction.

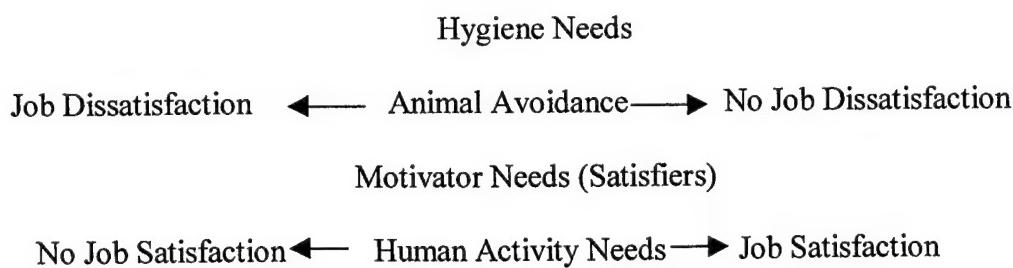


Figure 1. Herzberg's Satisfaction versus Dissatisfaction Model.

The hygiene factors are concerned with job environment, whereas motivators are the factors that meet individual's need for psychological growth. Herzberg also stated that the installation of motivators creates job enrichment. An essential ingredient of job enrichment is the opportunity for individuals to feel that they are growing psychologically. The type of learning that creates job enrichment will promote individual stimulation, creativity, and exploration of new job dimensions (Herzberg, 1976). This learning which helps to create job enrichment coincides with the ANA's (1990) evaluation of staff development activities for nurses. The ANA (1990) states that the structure and process of staff development is based on a lifelong learning process that is flexible and has immediate or future application, and promotes professional development and advances the career goals of registered nurses.

Traditionally, managers have believed that increased satisfaction leads to increased performance on the job. In a meta-analysis of job satisfaction and job performance, Iaffaldano & Muchinsky (1985) concluded that improved job performance leads to rewards which in turn results in increased job satisfaction. Job performance can be enhanced or improved by either educational or training opportunities. Therefore, to increase job satisfaction, it is important to promote and offer educational opportunities to develop employee performance.

McCloskey & McCain (1988) also measured variables associated with performance. One of the variables, total number of years of education, positively correlated with higher levels of performance and distinguished between the top and medium performers.

### Organizational Commitment

The four commonly cited types of commitment an individual may experience simultaneously at a work setting are organizational commitment, job commitment, career commitment, and community commitment (Martin, 1982). Community commitment has been defined as the set of social identification and interactions within the geographical setting in which one lives. Career commitment has been defined as the degree of attitudinal commitment in response to the progression of an individual's responsibilities in their present occupation. Job commitment has been defined as the degree of attitudinal dedication to the set of work tasks in one's present occupation (Martin, 1982).

Corley & Mauksch (1993) explored the different forms of commitments that nurses develop during their lifetime and suggested that the primary four commitments listed above each have sub-scales of commitments due to the personal intensity of providing nursing care. Each type of commitment affects the other types and should not be measured without considering the impact of the others. Socialization processes permeate into all of the types of commitment. Formal education and other types of learning experiences are factors that should be considered in the socialization processes of all forms of nurse commitment (Corley & Mauksch, 1993).

The type of commitment to be examined in this study is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been defined several ways. The definition to be used in this study is based on the collective works of Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1979). The definition contains both attitudinal and behavioral

components. Organizational commitment is viewed as the relative strength of an individual's identification with the involvement in a particular organization. Organizational commitment includes: a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, 2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers 1979).

Organizational commitment is different from job satisfaction.

Commitment is one's response to the organization as a whole whereas job satisfaction is a response to the job or certain aspects of the job. Organizational commitment is more stable over time, whereas satisfaction is reflective of more immediate responses (Mowday, et al., 1979).

Three broad groupings of antecedents are said to create organizational commitment (Steers, 1977). These three groupings of antecedents are personal characteristics, job characteristics, and work experiences. Components of nursing staff development comprise different aspects of these antecedents. Examples of personal characteristics may include such things as educational level, the need for achievement, and motivation to learn. Job characteristics may include the availability of time to complete educational activities. Work experiences may include orientation activities, inservice opportunity, and attitudes of the organization regarding educational activities. Educational opportunity is one of the many components affecting organizational commitment.

Tumulty, Jernigan, & Kohut (1995) researched the nature of organizational commitment and whether or not nurses demonstrated a particular

form of organizational commitment. Forms of organizational commitment were grouped into the categories of moral, calculative and alienative commitment. Moral commitment is an intensely positive affective response based on internalization of the organization's goals and values. Calculative commitment is slightly less intense than moral commitment and based primarily on the individual's response to the exchange relationship between the organization and the individual. Alienative commitment is an intensely negative form of attachment associated with the use of coercive power. Of the 419 respondents of the study, 52 % demonstrated a moral commitment to their organization. The study indicated that the respondents felt a positive affective commitment to their organization. Individuals with a strong affective commitment and psychological investment in an organization typically do not respond well to a sudden change in the organization's direction without active communication and training (Tumulty et al., 1995).

### Intent to Remain

Fishbein (1975) theorized that if an individual's intentions can be predicated, the resulting behavior can also be predicted with a great degree of accuracy. Intention to behave is defined in terms of attitudes. Inherent to an attitude is the predisposition toward a given object and the behavioral response to that object. Additional factors related to an individual's intention to perform any behavior is related to two factors, the individual's beliefs about the object and the individual's evaluation of the object. Therefore, an individual's intention to

perform any behavior is related to the behavior in a given situation , the norms governing the behavior in that situation , and the individual's motivation to comply with these norms.

Other variables, labeled stimulus conditions, also influence behavior, but they do this indirectly by their influence on an individual's attitudes. One of the stimulus conditions that influences behavior is the satisfaction with educational opportunity within an organization (Fishbein, 1975).

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research proposes that satisfaction with educational opportunity is one of the organizational work-related factors that serves as a satisfier or motivator according to Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. The perception of educational opportunity is also associated with commitment to the organization. Lastly, satisfaction with educational opportunity is one of the stimulus conditions which influences individual behavior and is associated with intent to remain in an organization.

As discussed in each of the concept sections, each of the three variables (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain) has a multitude of factors that influence the degree in which they affect an individual's perception of their job/organization. Satisfaction with educational opportunity is just one of many factors that may affect an individual's perception of their job/organization. Therefore, the foundation of this study is to evaluate the association of educational opportunity satisfaction with the other three variables.

Each of the three variables (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain) affects each other. Therefore, when looking at the association between educational opportunity and one of the variables, the impact of the other two variables should also be considered. None of these variables stands alone, rather, they are interdependent upon one another.

Nursing staff development has been linked to the variables of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain with an organization. These variables have been shown to influence nurse retention. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain with an organization are conceptualized as the intermediate variables linking an individual's perception of satisfaction with staff development and retention. By exploring the relationship between staff development and the three intermediate variables, the relationship between staff development and nurse retention can be explored indirectly (Figure 2).

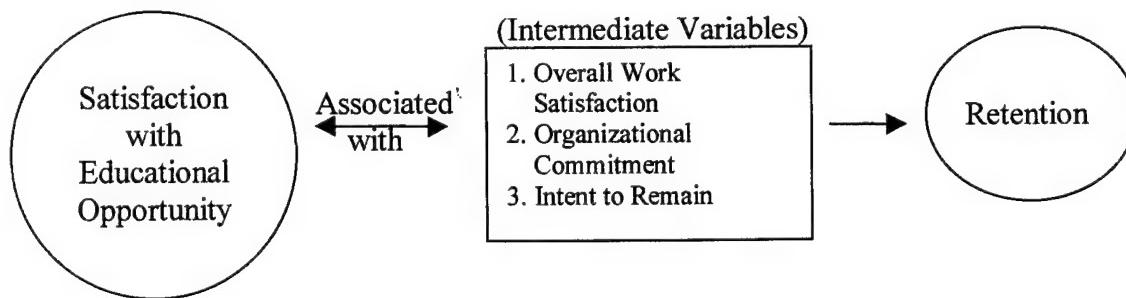


Figure 2. Theoretical framework of this research.

### Assumptions

Herzberg's motivation theory suggests that many variables play an important role in developing an individual's job satisfaction. Many of the components of staff development are associated with the variables that Herzberg identifies with affecting job satisfaction. These variables are classified as motivators. These motivators relate to the uniquely human need to grow psychologically. These needs are discussed in terms of stimuli to help the individual achieve growth. Those motivators that influence attitudes related to job satisfaction include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth (Herzberg et al., 1959). Therefore, an assumption of this research is that the perception of educational opportunity effects an individual's perception of job satisfaction.

A basic assumption of this study is the belief that staff development activities are important to Air Force nurses and vital for their growth. Individuals are not static but continually moving forward in order to achieve self-actualization. Since the Air Force uses education as a tool for recruitment, education is assumed to be a motivator or satisfier. Herzberg (1959), indicated that satisfiers/motivators, which include staff development activities, can enhance job satisfaction.

Another assumption of this study is that those nurses who are in management and advanced practice positions have developed a high degree of continuance organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1996). Therefore, nurse

managers and advanced practice nurses will not be part of the target population for this research.

Finally, for the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the Air Force values seasoned, expert nurses who possess a high level of commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, the Air Force will want to increase those variables found to be associated with high nurse satisfaction and organizational commitment.

### Summary

Nursing staff development activities are consistently cited as one of the top ten ways of improving nursing job satisfaction. Nursing staff development activities include in-service education, orientation, and continuing education. The American Nurses Association (ANA) supports learning activities that promote growth of the individual nurse and enhance competence as well as activities that are based on the performance expectations of the employer. Nursing staff development activities foster both individual and organizational goals with the ultimate purpose of improving patient care. Therefore, any activity the individual perceives as helping to improve professional, individual, or organizational worth is considered an educational opportunity.

Herzberg (1979) stated that the installation of motivators creates job enrichment. An essential ingredient of job enrichment is the opportunity for individuals to feel that they are growing psychologically. The type of learning that creates job enrichment will promote individual stimulation, creativity, and exploration of new job dimensions (Herzberg, 1979). This learning which helps

to create job enrichment coincides with the ANA's (1990) evaluation of staff development activities for nurses.

Three broad groupings of antecedents are said to create organizational commitment. These three groupings of antecedents are personal characteristics, job characteristics, and work experiences. Components of nursing staff development comprise different aspects of these antecedents. Therefore, educational opportunity is one of the many components affecting organizational commitment.

Stimulus conditions influence behavior, but do so indirectly by their influence on an individual's attitudes. Satisfaction with educational opportunity within an organization is one of the stimulus conditions that influence behavior of the stimulus conditions that influence behavior.

Each of the variables a) job satisfaction, b) organizational commitment, and d) intent to remain is affected by the perception of educational opportunity. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research is descriptive and explores the association between satisfaction with educational opportunity and the three intermediate variables of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to remain at an organization. By evaluating the above relationships, conclusions can be made in regard to the relationship between satisfaction with staff development opportunity and nurse retention.

### III. METHODS

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between perceived satisfaction with educational opportunity and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, and (c) intent to remain in the organization among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest regional medical center. This study is modeled after work done by Kirsch (1990) which focused on a non-military nurse setting. This study explores the selected variables of Kirsch in a military nurse population. Components of this chapter include the research design, setting, population, sampling plan, ethical considerations, instruments, procedure, data analysis plans, and summary in sequential order.

#### Research Design

The research design chosen to best identify the relationship between the variables in this study is a descriptive correlational design. According to Burns and Grove (1997) a descriptive correlational design is one that describes the variables and examines the relationships that exist in a given situation.

A significant strength of correlational studies is that they provide information regarding relationships that may exist. This information is especially beneficial to a young science such as nursing in building hypothesis for later

experimental studies. A core of descriptive studies must be present to build the science in a natural and systematic means (Burns & Grove, 1997).

### Setting of Research

This study was conducted at a Midwest regional Air Force medical center. The facility is a 150-bed facility that represents an average Air Force medical treatment facility in size and function. The facility is the setting of care for active duty members, dependents of the active duty member, retired military members, and dependents of retired military members. Approval from the Wright State Screening Committee was obtained (Appendix A). The facility's research function group also reviewed and approved this research (Appendix B).

### Population

The target population for this research included staff nurses whose primary job description is to provide direct patient care. An assumption of this study is that those nurses who are in management positions and have advanced practice roles have developed a high degree of continuance organizational commitment. Therefore, nurses in management or advanced practice roles were not included in this study.

Air Force nurses come from all over the country with many differing socio-economical and cultural backgrounds. While representing a diversity in the U. S. population, the Air Force Nurse Corps is very different demographically than the civilian nursing population. Men comprise approximately 4.3 % of the

national nurse work force. In the Air Force, 26 % of the nurse population are men. The civilian nurse work force has approximately 10% ethnic minorities or non-Caucasian nurses. Air Force nurses are made up of over 15% ethnic minorities.

The educational level of Air Force nurses is also remarkably different than that of their civilian counter parts. The civilian nurse work force is comprised of approximately 34 % diploma school graduates, 28 % associate degree graduates, 27 % bachelor's degree graduates, and 8 % advanced degree graduates (Masters or Doctorate). The Air force Nurse Corp is made up of less than 0.2% associate degree graduates, 70 % bachelor's degree graduates, and 30 % advanced degree graduates (MPC DOD Report, April 1998, & Moses, 1992).

### Sampling Plan

Convenience sampling was the method used in this research. A convenience sample is useful for exploratory studies (Burns and Grove, 1997).

Questionnaires were given to 54 staff nurses during their monthly staff meetings. Of these questionnaires, 50 of them were completed and usable. Three units were included in study. These units included the Intensive Care Unit and two Medical Surgical Units. Other units within the medical center did not have a staff meeting during the time of the research.

A power analysis was done at the Wright State University Statistical Department. The sample size suggested for this research was between 80 and 143 respondents based on the homogeneity of variance.

Participants were asked to fill out questionnaires during their monthly nurse staff meetings. The questionnaires included a cover letter (Appendix C) that contains an area for the participant's name and demographic data. The cover letter and questionnaire were separated from each other upon receiving them. The cover letter and questionnaire were given identifiers to allow the researcher to later compare the demographic information with the questionnaire responses.

### Human Rights

As outlined in Burns and Grove (1997) those human rights that require protection in research include the individual's right to: self determination, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, fair treatment, and protection from discomfort or harm. Each of these rights except for the protection from discomfort or harm were addressed in the questionnaire cover letter. Risks were minimal for the participants in this study.

Ethically, individuals must be able to conduct their lives as they chose without external controls. The right to not participate in this research without any repercussions communicated in the questionnaire cover letter.

The right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be protected in several ways. First, individuals answering the questionnaire were asked to not put their name or any form of identification on the questionnaire itself, just the cover letter. The cover letter were separated from the questionnaires. No one except the researcher and the research advisor have access to the questionnaires. The questionnaires are being kept in a secure site at the researcher's office. The

questionnaire included only circled responses to questions, therefore, no identification can be made by hand writing. The data will be destroyed.

The selection of a population to be studied should be fair to each individual of that population. By including all staff nurses who provide direct patient care on the units available, no individual was intentionally excluded. The same questionnaire was given to all the participants.

### Instruments

The questionnaire for this research (Appendix D) was made up of four instruments. These instruments included the *Perception of Hospital Educational Opportunity Scale*, the *Organizational Commitment Scale*, the *Overall Work Satisfaction Scale*, and *the Intent to Remain Questionnaire*. These four instruments were also used in the previous studies by Kirsch (1990) and Cassandra et al. (1994).

*The Perception of Hospital Educational Opportunity Scale* was developed by Kirsch (1990) in an effort to evaluate nurses' perceptions of hospital sponsored staff development activities. The questionnaire was developed to include the three components of staff development which are orientation, in-service education and continuing education. The scale has a series of both positive and negative phrases which describe the individual's perceptions of educational opportunities where they work. The instrument has a total of 16 likert type questions using a 7-point scale (7=strongly agree, 4=undecided, 1=strongly disagree, etc.). Responses to the questions are summed and divided by the total

number of items in the questionnaire to provide a single score. Negatively stated item scores are reversed. The possible total scores range from 16 to 112; the higher the score, the more positive the perception of educational opportunity. Content validity for the *Perception of Educational Opportunity Scale* was established using a six-panel jury at a large Midwestern university hospital. Reliability was established by the test-retest method with a correlational score of 0.47 which was a significant correlation at the 0.05 level (Kirsch, 1990).

The *Organizational Commitment Scale* was developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). The scale is a series of statements representing the feelings an individual may have about the organization for which he/she works. The scale has a series of positive phrases regarding organizational commitment. The instrument has a total of 9 likert type questions using a 7-point scale (7=strongly agree, 4=undecided, 1=strongly disagree, etc.). Responses to the questions are summed and divided by the total number of items in the questionnaire to provide a single score. Negatively stated item scores are reversed. The possible total scores range from 9 to 63; the higher the score, the more positive the level of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was chosen to be measured in this study because educational opportunity is seen as an organizational variable rather than job, career, or community variable. Test-retest reliability for the *Organizational Commitment Scale* ranged from 0.53 to .075. Multiple samples tested positive for convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity.

The *Job Description Index* measures overall work satisfaction. Five areas of work are measured: (a) the type of work, (b) the pay, (c) opportunities for promotion, (d) supervision, and (e) co-workers on the job.

A list of 88 adjectives or phrases describing how the respondent feels is provided. For each phrase, the respondent indicates yes if applicable, no if not applicable, and a question mark if undecided. For every yes answer to a positive question, 3 points are given; for every no answer to a positive question, 0 points are given. For every yes answer to a negative question, 0 points are given; for every no answer to a negative question, 3 points are given. For every question mark, 1 point is given. Respondents have a possible score range from 0 to 264; the higher the score, the greater the level of overall job satisfaction. The *Job Description index* was chosen for several reasons. The index addresses specific areas of satisfaction rather than general satisfaction. The respondent is not required to make abstractions or understand complicated information. The respondent is asked to describe his/her work rather than to state how satisfied s/he is with the work. Also, the index asks the individual to describe specific aspects of their job rather than trying to summarize internal feelings towards the job. All five subscales of the index are being used because: (a) they represent different areas of satisfaction, (b) varying scales may be more important to one person than another, (c) different areas may be related differently to individual characteristics and demographics, and (d) different areas may be affected by different situational variables (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969).

In the work of Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), numerous studies were cited which evaluated the reliability and validity of the ***Job Description Index***.

These studies demonstrated the ***Job Description Index*** to have an internal consistency of 0.79 to 0.8. Correlations between the ***Job Description Index*** and other satisfaction tools have been between 0.7 and 0.8

The ***Intent to Remain Scale*** was developed in a study by Price and Mueller (1981). The scale is made up of two questions. The respondent is given five possible answers to each question. A score of 1 to 5 is assigned to each of the answers with 5 being the greatest intent to stay and 1 being the least intent to stay. The level of the intent to remain is the sum of the scores of the two answers. The possible range of scores is from 2 to 10. The higher the score, the greater the intent to remain. Price and Mueller (1981) determined the ***Intent to remain Scale*** was both valid and reliable with a 0.5 correlation between the index and turnover, and 0.3 correlation with other turnover measures.

Four demographic variables were chosen for evaluation in this study. These variables include gender, rank, education level, and number of years as a nurse. These variables were included in the two previous studies upon which this research is built (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra, 1994). Porter & Steers (1973) found that turnover is generally inversely associated with age. An assumption of this study is that the same may be true for rank since rank is highly matched with age in this study. Also, rank can be seen as the length of time in a present position; a variable in the original two studies. Gender is being included because 27 % of nurses in the Air Force are male whereas only 4 % of civilian nurses are male,

offering explanations for any unusual differences in study results. The education levels for Air Force nurses tend to be higher than their civilian counterparts. The educational differences could also be a factor in result differences of this study. Finally, the number of years as a nurse needs to be included because in the first two studies, findings regarding the variable's association with educational opportunity were conflicting.

### Procedure

Data collection began after approval was obtained from the Wright State University IRB, the medical center research function group, and thesis members. The researcher met with each of the nurse managers at the medical center to schedule participation during the nurse monthly nurse staff meetings. Three of the five units were having staff meetings during the research time frame. These three units included the intensive care unit and two inpatient medical-surgical units. At the beginning of the staff meetings, the researcher presented an overview of the study, explained how to fill out the questionnaires, and discussed the participant's rights. When the nurses completed the questionnaires, they were given to the researcher and separated from the cover sheets. The data was then recorded and analyzed statistically.

The overall results were provided to the nurse staff development department for viewing during the month of May, 1999. No individual or specific information was provided or viewed by anyone other than the researcher and the research committee chairperson.

## Summary

The purpose of this study has been to explore the relationship between perceived satisfaction with educational opportunities and (a) organizational commitment (b) overall work satisfaction (c) and intent to remain among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest regional medical center. The research design chosen to best evaluate this relationship is a descriptive correlational design. The study was conducted at a Midwest Air Force regional medical center. The medical center is a 150 bed facility that represents an average Air Force medical treatment facility in size and function. The target population for this research was staff nurses whose primary job description is to provide direct patient care. All staff nurses in available units who provide direct patient care were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire during the monthly nurse staff meetings. The individual's right to self determination, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and fair treatment was addressed with participants in the questionnaire cover letter and at the beginning of each staff meeting. The four instruments used in this research were the ***Perception of Hospital Educational Opportunity Scale***, the ***Organizational Commitment Questionnaire***, the ***Job Description Index***, and the ***Intent to Remain Scale***. The plan or timeline for this research followed the process outlined in Burns and Grove (1997) and the established procedures at Wright State University. The demographical data collected in this research included the subject's gender, military rank, educational level, and total years as a practicing nurse. Continuous data collected included the individual's scores of each of the four variables: Perceived satisfaction with

educational opportunity, organizational commitment, overall work satisfaction, and intent to remain. Generalized linear model analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to measure the strength of the association between the satisfaction with educational opportunity and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, and (c) intent to remain, and (d) demographic variables.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected for this research were obtained through responses to individual questionnaires. The questionnaires were disseminated during monthly unit staff meetings to staff nurses working on inpatient units within a Midwest regional Air Force medical center. A total of 50 of the 54 returned questionnaires were complete and usable.

Four instruments were used to develop the questionnaire for this research. These four instruments were the *Perception of Hospital Educational Opportunity Scale*, *The Organizational Commitment Scale*, *The Job Description Index*, and the *Intent to Remain Scale*. Frequency and frequency percentages were calculated for each of the variables from the four instruments. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic data obtained. Generalized linear model analysis and regression analysis was conducted with both categorical and contiguous independent variables to determine which variables relate to each other, if any, and how they relate to each other.

##### Demographic Data

Demographic data collected included rank, gender, education, and the number of years as a nurse. Demographic data were collected to determine if any relationships could be drawn between rank/gender/education/number of years as a nurse and satisfaction with educational opportunity.

The sample included the three ranks of Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, and Captain. Second Lieutenants were the lowest rank represented and Captains were the highest rank represented. The sample consisted of 15 Second Lieutenants (30%), 17 First Lieutenants (34%), and 18 Captains (36%). See Figure 3.

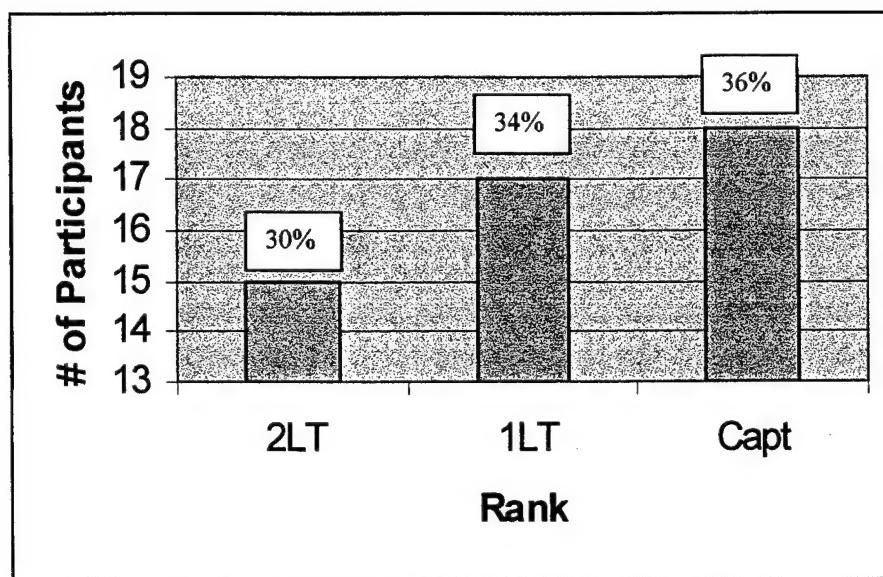


Figure 3. Sample comparison of ranks participating in research.

The mean number of years experience for the Second Lieutenants in this study was 1.9. The mean number of years experience for the First Lieutenants in this study was 3.8. The mean number of years experience for the Captains in this study was 9. Figure 4 is a comparison of the ranks and number of years as a nurse among the participants of this study.

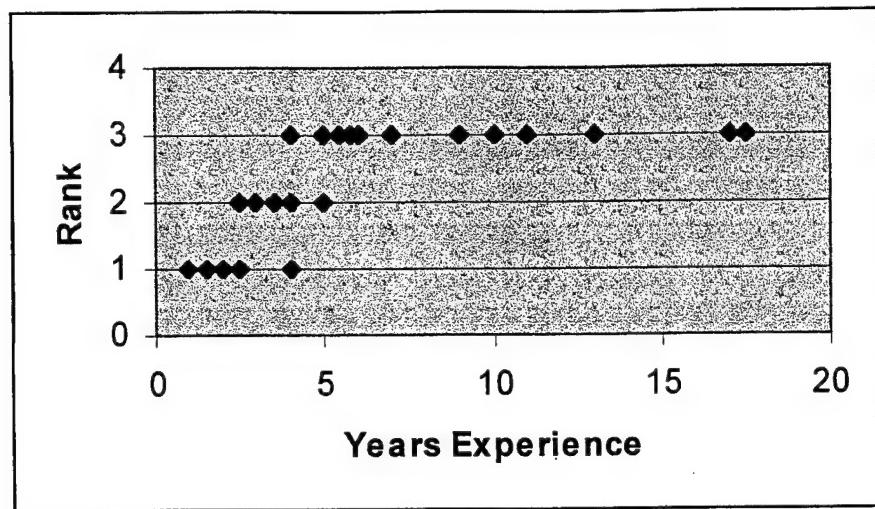


Figure 4. Years experience compared to military rank. 1 = 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, 2 = 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, and 3 = Captain.

The sample consisted of 30 females (60%) and 20 males (40%). Figure 5 demonstrates the percentage of male/female participants in this research. The percentage of male nurses in the Air Force is approximately 28%. The Chi Square goodness of fit did not differ between the sample and the total population of Air Force nurses ( $X^2 = 6.63$ , ns).

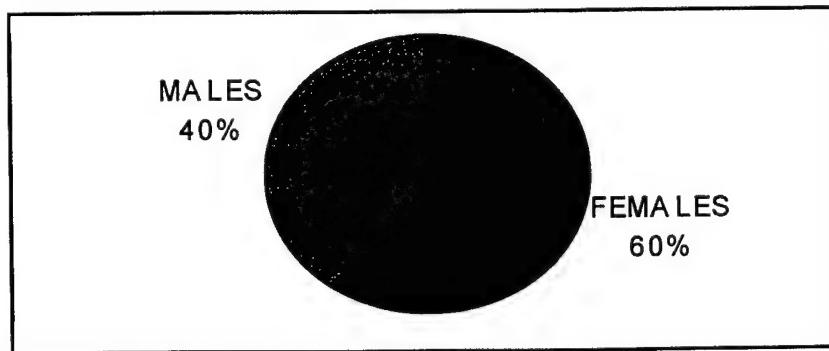


Figure 5. Percentage of Females/Males in sample.

All of the nurses participating in this research held a baccalaureate degree in nursing. In the Air Force, 87 percent of the nurses between the ranks of Second Lieutenant and Captain hold a baccalaureate degree.

Among the sample, the years of experience ranged from 1 to 17.5 with 68 percent having five years or less. The mean number of years as a nurse was 5.02 with a standard deviation of 3.76. The median number of years experience among the sample was 4. Figure 6 shows the number of years experience reported by participants of this research.

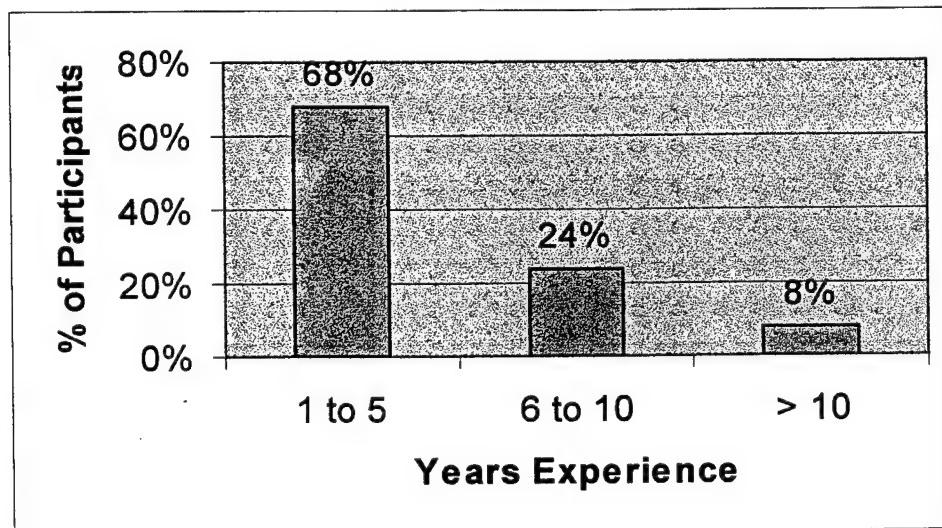


Figure 6. Years of experience groupings.

#### Descriptive Data

The first research question of this study was: **What is the perceived level of satisfaction of staff nurses with educational opportunities at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? The *Perception of Hospital Educational***

*Opportunity Scale* was used to measure perceived satisfaction with staff development activities. The instrument has 16 statements regarding the perception of hospital sponsored staff development activities. The possible perception of education opportunity scores could range from 16 to 112. Scores between 56 and 71 represent a neutral position, 72 to 87 a slightly positive perception, 88 to 103 a moderately positive perception, and 104 to 112 a strongly positive perception. The scores of the participants of this study ranged from 60 to 110. Figure 7 represents the distribution of perceived educational opportunity scores for the respondents of this study. The mean score among participants was 79.2 with a standard deviation of 9.57.

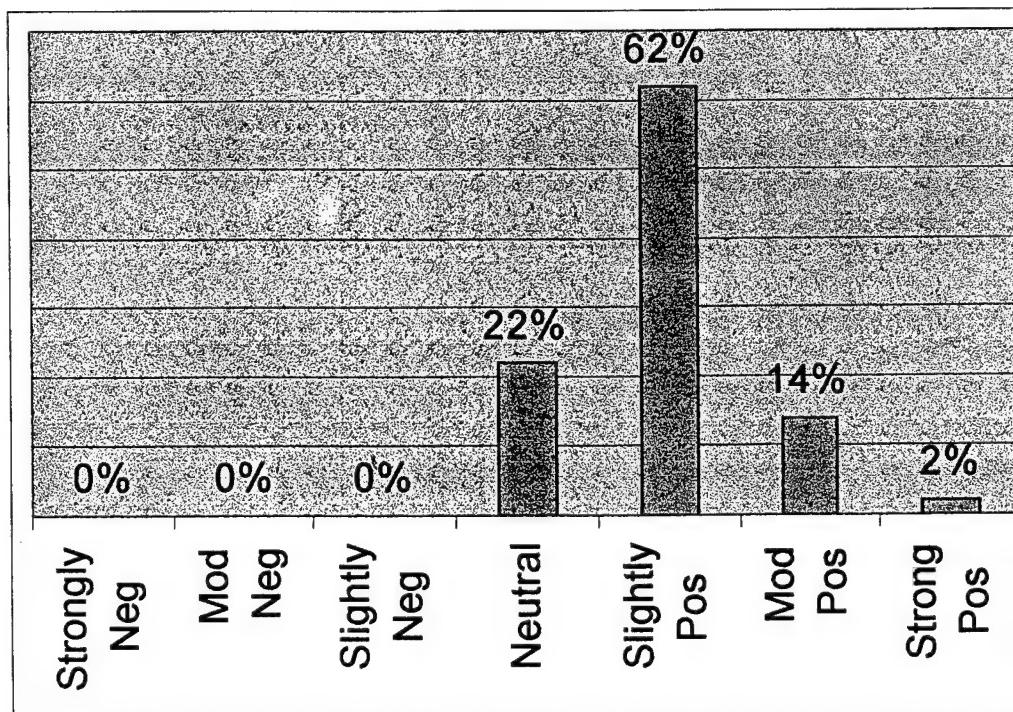
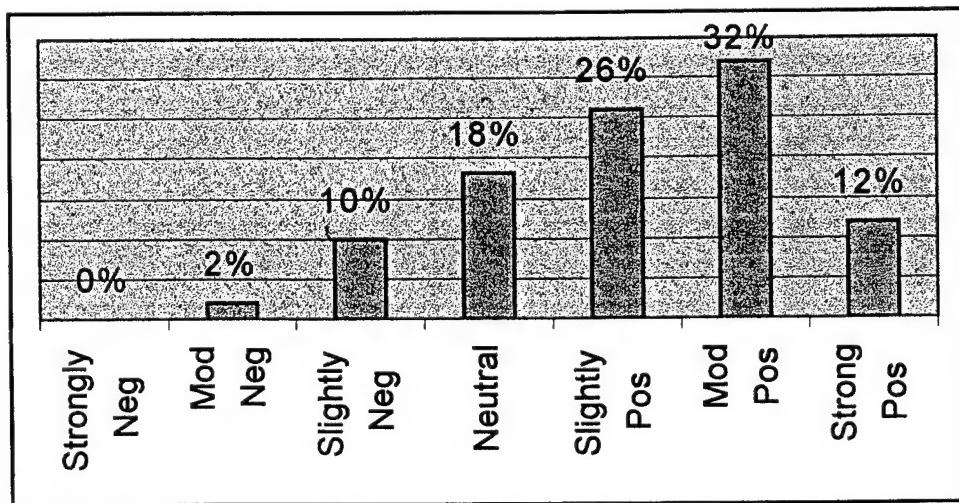


Figure 7. Distribution of Educational Opportunity Scores.

The second research question of this study was: **What is the level of organizational commitment of staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center?** The *Organizational Commitment Scale* was used to measure perceived level of organizational commitment. The scale had 9 statements about the feelings an individual may have regarding their commitment to an organization. Possible scores ranged from 9 to 63. Scores for the participants in this research ranged from 19 to 62. Scores between 14 and 22 indicate a moderately negative opinion, 23 to 31 indicate a slightly negative opinion, 32 to 40 represent a neutral position, 41 to 49 a slightly positive perception, 50 to 58 a moderately positive perception, and 59 to 63 a strongly positive perception. The mean organizational commitment score was 46.06 with a standard deviation of 11.03. Figure 8 represents the distribution of organizational commitment scores. These scores were clustered toward the positive side of the scale.



**Figure 8.** Distribution of organizational commitment scores.

The third research question of this study was: **What is the level of overall work satisfaction among staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center?** The *Job description Index* was used to measure perceived overall work satisfaction. Six areas of work satisfaction were measured to determine the overall perception of work satisfaction. Possible scores for the *Job Description Index* are between 0 to 264. Overall work satisfaction scores for participants in this study were between 49 to 248. Only 8 of the 50 respondents reported an overall work score of less than 132 (half of the possible points). The other 42 respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their jobs overall. The mean overall job satisfaction score was 177.32 with a standard deviation of 46.42. Figure 9 demonstrates the distribution of scores.

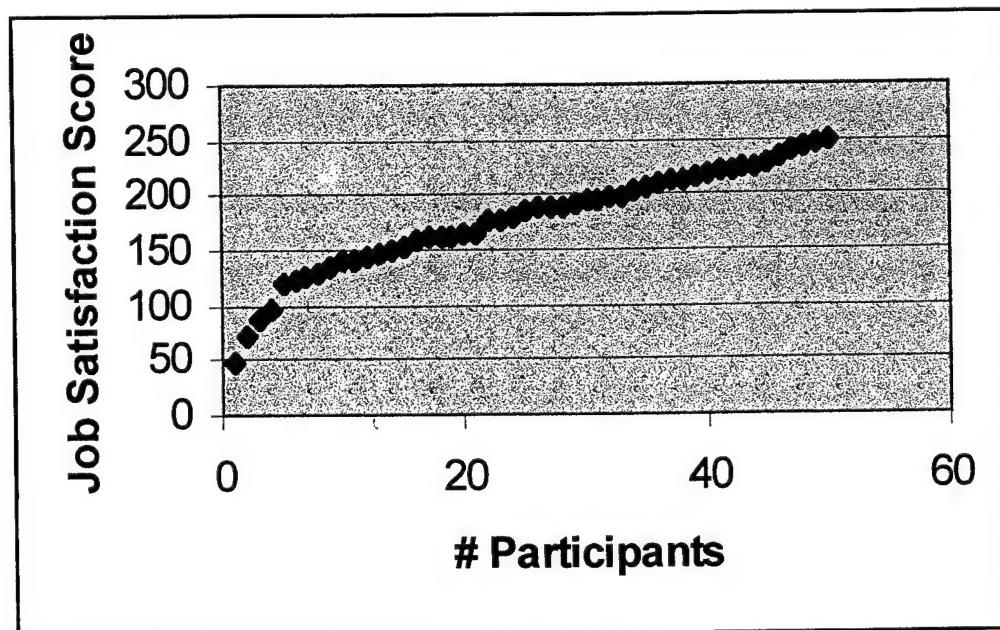


Figure 9. Distribution of job satisfaction scores.

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each of the sub-scales of the *Job Description Index* to determine which indicators were the best determinants of overall work satisfaction. The two sub-scales which demonstrated the greatest Pearson product correlational coefficient with overall job satisfaction were the *work on present job and job in general* scales at the 0.82 and 0.89 level. These results suggest that satisfaction with the job in general and the present job were the two greatest contributors to overall job satisfaction.

The fourth research question of this study was: **What is the level of intent to remain among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?** The *Intent to Remain Scale* was used to measure the perceived intention to remain in the Air Force. Possible scores for this instrument range from 2 to 10. The scores for the participants in this study were spread fairly evenly across the scale with a mean score of 6.12 and a mode of 6.0. Figure 10 represents the intent to remain distribution of scores.

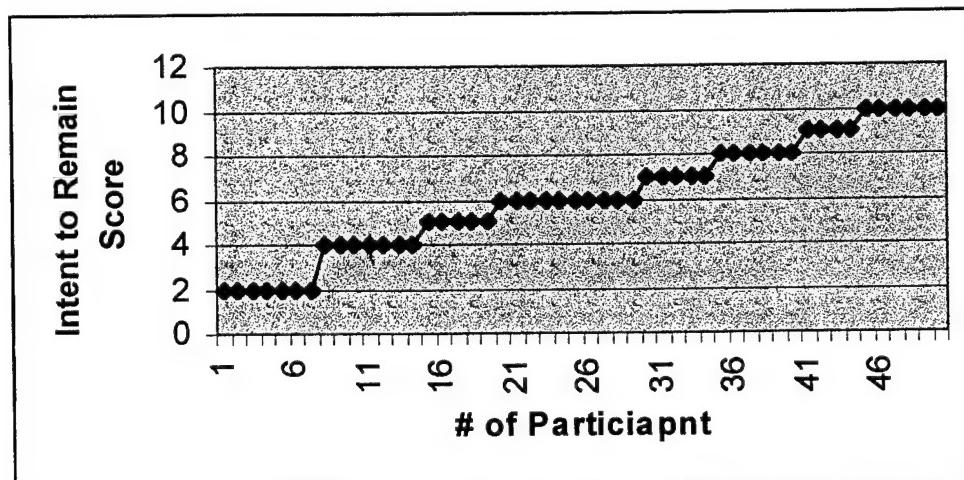


Figure 10. Intent to remain score distribution.

The fifth and final research question was: **What is the relationship between the perceived satisfaction with educational opportunity and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, (c) intent to remain, and (d) selected demographic variables?** Generalized linear model (GLM) analysis was conducted to answer the above question. GLM allows regression to be performed with both categorical and continuous independent variables. Gender, rank, number of years as a nurse, organizational commitment score, overall work satisfaction score, and the intent to remain score were entered into the model as independent variables. Only three factors were influential in determining the educational opportunity score. These three factors were overall work satisfaction ( $F = 33.67$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ), intent to remain ( $F = 7.90$ ,  $p = .0075$ ), and years experience ( $F = 9.10$ ,  $p = .0043$ ). Additionally, a traditional multiple regression analysis was done to show specifically how the variables relate to each other. Table 1 demonstrates the parameter estimates of the multiple regression analysis.

Table 1

Multiple regression analysis parameters for the three variables found to have either a positive or negative relationship with educational opportunity scores.

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Prob > T
Job Satisfaction	0.137623	0.0001
Intent to Remain	-1.603395	0.0075
Years Experience	-1.319121	0.0043

The overall job satisfaction score and the educational opportunity perception score demonstrated a positive relationship ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). For each additional point of the overall job satisfaction score, the educational opportunity score increased 0.14 points.

The intent to remain score and the educational opportunity perception scores were inversely related ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ,  $p = 0.0075$ ). For each additional point of the intent to remain score, the educational opportunity score decreased by 1.6 points.

The years experience and the educational opportunity perception scores were inversely related ( $R^2 = 0.54$ ,  $p = 0.0043$ ). For each additional year as a nurse, the educational opportunity scored decreased by 1.3 points. None of the other variables demonstrated a positive or negative relationship with the perception of educational opportunity.

### Summary

Data were collected on 50 staff nurses using a four part questionnaire distributed during their monthly unit staff meetings. The study was done at an Air Force Midwest regional medical center. The research was concerned with the following five questions: What is the perceived level of satisfaction of staff nurses with educational opportunities at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? What is the level of organizational commitment of staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? What is the level of overall work satisfaction among staff nurses at an Air Force Regional Medical Center? What is the level of intent

to remain among Air Force staff nurses at a Midwest Regional Medical Center?

What is the relationship between the perceived satisfaction with educational opportunity and (a) organizational commitment, (b) overall work satisfaction, (c) intent to remain, and (d) selected demographic variables? The following chapter includes discussion of conclusions, implications, and recommendations related to the research findings associated with these questions and pertinent data.

## V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which nurse perception of educational opportunity is associated with: a) organizational commitment, b) overall work satisfaction, c) the intent to remain with the organization, and d) selected demographic variables. In particular, this research was aimed at exploring the perception of educational opportunity among Air Force nurses. Nurses in the military are in the unique position of serving two primary roles. These roles are as an officer and as a nurse. Corley and Mauksch (1993) noted that professional commitment for the nurse is alignment with the values of the profession. Likewise, it could be argued that professional commitment for the officer is alignment with the values of the Air Force. This research has attempted to future the understanding of what role education plays in the development of nurses and to determine if military nurses, with the additional role of officer, perceive educational opportunities in a different manner than their civilian counterparts.

Nurse retention has been shown to decrease staffing costs by improving productivity and decreasing turnover costs (Jones, 1990). The variables associated with nurse retention chosen for this research include work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with an organization. These three variables have also been associated with nursing staff development (Mowday et al., 1979; Smith et al., 1969; and Price & Muller, 1981). Therefore, work satisfaction, organizational

commitment, and the intent to remain can be thought of as intermediate variables linking nursing staff development and nurse retention.

The theoretical framework of this research utilized selected variables based on studies done related to employee turnover. Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation identifies educational opportunities as one of many motivators/satisfiers (1976). These motivators/satisfiers are associated with work satisfaction, intentional turnover behavior, and organizational commitment (Fishbein, 1975; Mowdy, et al. 1979).

The two previous studies upon which this research is based showed a significant correlation between educational opportunity and the three variables of overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with the organization ( Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra, et al., 1994). In the previous research, the strongest correlation was seen between educational opportunity and organizational commitment.

Herzberg's two factor theory has also been used to explain the relationships associated with employee retention. For employers, nurse retention and satisfaction with educational opportunity can be viewed as indirectly associated to one another by way of intermediate variables of which there are many. The intermediate variables chosen for this research were work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the intent to remain with an organization. In previous studies (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra, 1994) utilizing civilian populations, these three variables positively correlated with educational opportunity satisfaction. In this research, a strong positive relationship existed between educational opportunity satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. No positive or negative relationship was demonstrated between perceived educational

opportunity and organizational commitment. A negative relationship between educational opportunity and the intent to remain was demonstrated.

Consistent with previous studies (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra, 1994) this study demonstrated a negative relationship between years of experience and educational opportunity satisfaction. The greater the number of years experience, the less the participants perceived educational satisfaction. This data may be interpreted to suggest that the educational opportunities of the population sampled may not be adequate to meet the needs of the more experienced nurse.

A strong relationship between educational opportunity satisfaction and overall work satisfaction is consistent with Herzberg's (1976) two factor theory of motivation. In the theory, educational opportunity is defined as a factor contributing to growth which is a satisfier or motivator. The results of this study are consistent with the Herzberg's theory that educational opportunity positively affects motivation and overall work satisfaction.

Educational opportunity is one of many components affecting organizational commitment (Steer, 1977). The majority of the respondent's scores in this study demonstrated a positive organizational commitment. The majority of the educational opportunity scores were positive also. The scores of these two variables did not demonstrate a relationship with each other. Even though components of the nursing staff development process are antecedents of organizational commitment, the findings in this study demonstrate that staff development is only part of, and not the central antecedent of organizational commitment. Staff development may only affect organizational commitment if other positive antecedents are present and negative

antecedents absent. An example of a positive antecedent would be praise of the employee. An example of a negative antecedent would be ostracizing the employee. Only if the employee is receiving praise and not being ostracized can staff development play a role in the employee's organizational commitment.

The intent to remain scores in this research demonstrated an inverse relationship with the educational opportunity scores. This finding was not expected. According to Fishbein (1975) one of the stimulus behaviors that influences intentional behavior is educational opportunities. Fishbein (1975) suggested that educational opportunity does not directly, but rather, indirectly influences attitudes/intentions. If variables directly affecting attitudes are present, those indirectly affecting variables such as educational opportunity would do little to change or direct attitudes. If educational opportunity does not influence the intent to remain for this population, then the question needs to be posed as to what would create an intent to remain among this population.

As with the two previous studies (Kirsch, 1990; Cassandra, 1994) the number of years as a nurse demonstrated an inverse relationship with educational opportunity satisfaction. Rank was correlational with the number of years as a nurse and therefore is also a factor inversely correlated with educational opportunity in this population. Some nurses enter the Air Force with previous nursing experience. The population in this study represented a group in which experience and rank matched. Therefore, this population may not reflect the normal Air Force population in relation to experience and rank.

The population for this research demonstrated a much higher relationship ( $p < 0.0001$ ) between educational opportunity satisfaction and overall work satisfaction than the two previous studies ( $p < 0.001$ ) of Kirsch (1990) and Cassandra (1994). This difference could be due to the population of this research being new to nursing (67 percent with less than 4 years nursing experience) and being very satisfied with their jobs while still being uncertain about their Air Force career.

The environment of the research setting for this study was one of change. Downsizing and restructuring may have created an environment of uncertainty in which the respondents were not able to develop the organizational trust which would have allowed them to have a high level of organizational commitment or intentions to remain with the organization.

The inverse relationship between satisfaction with educational opportunities and the number of years as a nurse have implications for nursing staff development. Historically, the major functions of staff development have been categorized into developing staff, orienting staff, training staff, and meeting the requirements of governing accreditation agencies (Bland & Michael, 1997). Downsizing and escalating health care costs have forced staff development departments to focus on orientations and meeting accreditation standards. Therefore, educational activities focused primarily on orientation and the needs of the less experienced nurse may not be sufficient to meet the needs of the more experienced nurse.

### Implications

Interestingly, the respondents of this research showed that as a group they had a high level of work satisfaction and were positive about organizational commitment.

However, as a group the intent to remain scores showed ambiguity. This ambiguity may reflect the current uncertainty of a downsizing Air Force. This data may be an indicator specific for military nursing staff development officers. If the individual is more satisfied with educational activities in the Air Force, they tend to be more satisfied with their job. Assuming the Air Force wishes to retain experienced nurses and since an inverse relationship between years experience and educational opportunity was demonstrated for this population, the military educator may need to consider the needs of the experienced nurse when developing educational offerings.

No relationship between organizational commitment and educational opportunity was shown to exist. The intent to remain and educational opportunity scores demonstrated an inverse relationship. Therefore, satisfaction with educational opportunity may be a better indicator of job satisfaction for the military nurse than the variables of organizational commitment and intent to remain.

Interestingly, many experienced nurses enter the military as a lieutenant. Providing satisfying staff development for the mature nurse who is in the early phases of their military career may prove to be a challenge for the nursing staff development officer. The needs of the military must be weighed against the needs of the individual. The military may need to quickly orient the mature nurse and provide only in-house training to the new nurse, while the new nurse may want to seek out more specific growth oriented education.

Can the military provide all the training/educational needs of the professional nurse internally? The findings of this research suggests that as the military nurse matures, their needs are not being satisfied in regards to professional development.

External resources may be better suited to create an environment that will foster growth for the mature military nurse. Possible resources for the nurse educator would be to promote nurses to utilize local universities. As the military nurse matures, s/he becomes more specialized and focused in their nursing practice. This specialization may require educational experiences that can only be found at the university or a specialty group educational offering.

The findings of this research may also suggest that the military staff development officer may want to improve access of outside educational offerings for the experienced nurse. As a nurse matures in the Air Force s/he should be reminded to apply for outside continuing education. If the experienced nurse attends continuing educational offerings pertaining to their specialty at least yearly, they will possibly be more satisfied with educational opportunity through the Air Force.

The findings also suggest that the experienced nurse may also reach a point in their career where they may require academic resources to meet their educational needs. Developing close relationships between military hospitals and local universities may foster the utilization of educational advancement to develop experienced staff.

#### Limitations of Research Methods

This research contributes to developing the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between satisfaction with staff development and nurse retention. Therefore, this study was done to build upon previously acquired knowledge using a different/unique population.

Findings from this research suggest that a strong relationship between educational opportunity and job satisfaction exists in the population questioned. The findings of this research also suggest that nursing staff development educators may need to assess the need for different educational offerings that appeal to the more experienced nurse.

Many variables have been shown to influence nurse retention. This research has been limited to four variables which are considered to be intermediate variables linking educational opportunity and retention. Therefore, many confounding variables may have influenced this research.

This study was descriptive and therefore cannot be generalized into a broader or different population. Cause and effect cannot be inferred from this research. And finally, since convenience sampling is being used, the research can only be exploratory and cannot be used for confirmation (Burns & Grove, 1997).

A power analysis was done prior to data collection. Due to limited availability, the final sample population did not meet the standard established in the power analysis. The larger the sample size, the more credible the findings and more generalizable to similar populations.

### Recommendations For Future Research

A replication of this study using a larger population of military nurses would help to establish if educational opportunity is truly an indicator of job satisfaction among military nurses. A replication study would also be beneficial in demonstrating whether or not the theoretical framework in this research is valid for military nurses.

Further study to evaluate the relationship between educational opportunity and the intent to remain may also be beneficial as the military downsizes its nursing corp.

Research needs to be done to further establish the relationship between the number years as a nurse and satisfaction with educational opportunity. This research would help nursing staff development departments target educational offerings for the more experienced nurse.

Specifically for military nursing, future research could be done to compare and contrast the varying means of providing satisfying educational opportunities for the experienced nurse. This research could focus on academic or external sources of educational opportunity.

## **Appendix A**

### **IRB Forms**



# WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

Research and  
Sponsored Programs  
122 Allyn Hall  
2425/3781 (FAX)  
e-mail: [rsp@wright.edu](mailto:rsp@wright.edu)

**DATE:** January 26, 1999

**TO:** Jerry R. Harvey, P.I., Student  
Janet S. Fulton, Ph.D., Fac. Adv.  
College Of Nursing & Health

**FROM:** Robyn Simmons, Sponsored Programs Assistant  
Secretary, WSU Institutional Review Board

**SUBJECT:** SC# 2079  
*The Relationship Between Perceived Satisfaction With Staff Development Activities And The Selected Variables Of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, And The Intent To Remain With An Organization*

*RJS*

This memo is to verify the receipt and acceptance of your response to the conditions placed on the above referenced human subjects protocol/amendment.

These conditions were lifted on: January 26, 1999

This study/amendment now has full approval and you are free to begin the research project. This implies the following:

1. That this approval is for one year from the approval date shown on the Action Form and if it extends beyond this period a request for an extension is required. (Also see expiration date on the Action Form)
2. That a progress report must be submitted before an extension of the approved one-year period can be granted.
3. That any change in the protocol must be approved by the IRB; otherwise approval is terminated.

If you have any questions concerning the condition(s), please contact me at 775-2425.

Thank you!

**Appendix B**  
**Agency Approval Letter**



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND  
WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE OHIO

26 April 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR CAPT JERRY R. HARVEY  
48 WELLS AVE  
DAYTON OH 45431

FROM: 74th MDOS/SGOA  
Clinical Investigations  
4881 Sugar Maple Drive  
Wright-Patterson AFB OH 45433-5300

SUBJECT: Proposed Protocol

1. The protocol you submitted, "The Relationship Between Perceived Satisfaction With Staff Development Activities and the Selected Variables of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and the Intent to Remain With an Organization," was reviewed via expedited review and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Wright-Patterson Medical Center on 15 April 1999. The Commander of Wright-Patterson Medical Center has also reviewed the protocol. It was determined to be exempt and has been assigned file number FWP19990021E. You may now begin your study.
2. Progress reports will be due annually. You will receive a reminder 30 days in advance when your report is due. If you complete your study prior to April 2000 a final report may be completed.
3. Any changes to the study must be submitted to the Clinical Investigations office for approval prior to initiation.
4. Any unanticipated major adverse reactions or other medical misadventures must be reported immediately to the department chairperson, the Chief of Medical Staff, the Clinical Investigations Coordinator and ultimately the commander IAW AFI 40-403. Such events will also need to be summarized in the subsequent progress report.
5. If you anticipate separating from the Air Force or changing assignments before the protocol is completed, you must notify the Clinical Investigations Office as soon as this is known. You will be required to either formally close the protocol, or to have another investigator take over the study. The latter process requires nomination by the flight commander, submission of a curriculum vitae, and approval by the Institutional Review Board.
6. Please indorse below and return to Clinical Investigations. I hope that your study will prove to be a worthwhile experience for you. Let us know if there is any way we can assist you.

DEBBIE BACHMAN  
Clinical Investigations Coordinator

1st IND

TO: SGOA/Clinical Investigations

Noted/Acknowledged

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principle Investigator

1 May 99  
Date

**Appendix C**  
**Questionnaire Cover Letter**

### **Research Questionnaire Cover Letter**

My name is Jerry Harvey. I am a graduate student at Wright State University. Let me take this opportunity to invite you to participate in an interesting research project! The primary purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between staff development and nurse satisfaction/retention. In an era of downsizing and "doing more with less", this data becomes very useful in providing meaning to what we do! **The focus of this research is on the perceptions of the nurse at the beside, that's you!**

I invite you to take a few minutes and explore your feelings regarding Air Force educational opportunities and answer this questionnaire. Several colleagues and myself have completed the questionnaire. It took approximately 10 minutes for each of us to complete. You will notice the questionnaire is actually a combination of four different instruments. You will not be asked to complete or do anything else for this study.

Please put your name and some basic demographic information on this cover sheet. Please do not put your name or any identification on the questionnaire. As soon as the questionnaire is received, the cover sheet and questionnaire will be separated for confidentiality. The only individuals who will have access to the questionnaire will be my thesis chairperson and myself. Individual information provided on these questionnaires **will remain confidential**. Only group results will be provided upon completion of this research. Participation is voluntary. Since participation is confidential, you may answer the questionnaire without any fear of supervisory perception or retaliation. Participation or non-participation will not affect your job in any way.

If you are interested in finding out the results of this study, a copy will be maintained in the Nursing Staff Development Office during the month of May, 1999. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact me at 253-0927 or by e-mail at [jrharv1@aol.com](mailto:jrharv1@aol.com).

**I'm excited about this research and greatly appreciate your participation. Please make sure you answer each and every question on both pages of the questionnaire. Thanks again for your time and help!**

JERRY R. HARVEY, RN

JANET S. FULTON, Ph.D., RN

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male / Female

Highest Educational Degree held?    Associate    Baccalaureate    Masters    Doctoral

How many years have you been a nurse? \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**  
**Questionnaire**

**With Respect to the Air Force, please indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by circling one of the alternatives beside each statement.**

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Adequate orientation is provided upon hire.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Orientation to new roles is not adequate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
An adequate number of inservice/staff development offerings are provided.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The content of inservice/staff development offerings is too simple.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is little opportunity to attend external workshops.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The staff development offerings are of high quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The inservice/staff development offerings are not applicable to my role.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning is considered a part of one's everyday role.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The managers support attendance of educational offerings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff development offerings are not at convenient times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The managers support attendance at external workshops.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is facilitation for the pursuit of advanced degrees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff development offerings do not provide practical information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff development offerings are on topics of interest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The presenters are for the most part stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff development offerings are not applicable to advancement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected to help the Air Force be successful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I talk up the Air Force to my friends as a great organization to work for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working in the Air Force.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find that my values and the Air Force's values are very similar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am proud to tell others that I am part of the Air Force.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Air Force inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am extremely glad that I chose the Air Force to work for over other organizations I was considering at the time I joined.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I really care about the fate of the Air Force.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
For me, the Air Force is the best of all possible organizations to work for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Place an X in front of the answer you most agree with.

Which of the following statements most clearly reflects your feeling about your future in the Air Force?

- Definitely will not leave.
- Probably will not leave.
- Uncertain.
- Probably will leave.
- Definitely will leave.

Do you expect to leave the Air Force in the near future?

- Will definitely leave in the near future.
- The chances are quite good that I will leave.
- The situation is uncertain.
- The chances are slight that I will leave.
- Definitely will not leave in the near future.

**In the columns beside each word or phrase, circle Y (yes) if it describes your work, N (no) if it does not describe it, or ? if you cannot decide.**

#### Work On Present Job

Y	N	?	Fascinating
Y	N	?	Routine
Y	N	?	Satisfying
Y	N	?	Boring
Y	N	?	Good
Y	N	?	Gives a sense of Accomplishment
Y	N	?	Respected
Y	N	?	Uncomfortable
Y	N	?	Pleasant
Y	N	?	Useful
Y	N	?	Challenging
Y	N	?	Simple
Y	N	?	Repetitive
Y	N	?	Creative
Y	N	?	Dull
Y	N	?	Uninteresting
Y	N	?	Can see Results
Y	N	?	Uses my Abilities

#### Opportunities for Promotion

Y	N	?	Good opportunities for promotion
Y	N	?	Opportunities somewhat limited
Y	N	?	Promotion on ability
Y	N	?	Good chance for promotion
Y	N	?	Unfair promotion policy
Y	N	?	Infrequent promotions
Y	N	?	Regular promotions
Y	N	?	Fairly good chance for promotion

#### Co-Workers

Y	N	?	Stimulating
Y	N	?	Boring
Y	N	?	Slow
Y	N	?	Helpful
Y	N	?	Stupid
Y	N	?	Responsible
Y	N	?	Fast
Y	N	?	Intelligent
Y	N	?	Easy to make enemies
Y	N	?	Talk too much
Y	N	?	Smart
Y	N	?	Lazy
Y	N	?	Unpleasant
Y	N	?	Gossipy
Y	N	?	Active
Y	N	?	Narrow interests
Y	N	?	Loyal
Y	N	?	Stubborn

#### Present Pay

Y	N	?	Income adequate for normal expenses
Y	N	?	Fair
Y	N	?	Barely live on income
Y	N	?	Bad
Y	N	?	Income provides luxuries
Y	N	?	Insecure
Y	N	?	Less than I deserve
Y	N	?	Well paid
Y	N	?	Underpaid

#### Supervision

Y	N	?	Asks my advice
Y	N	?	Hard to please
Y	N	?	Impolite
Y	N	?	Praises good work
Y	N	?	Tactful
Y	N	?	Influential
Y	N	?	Up-to-date
Y	N	?	Doesn't supervise enough
Y	N	?	Has favorites
Y	N	?	Tells me where I stand
Y	N	?	Annoying
Y	N	?	Knows job well
Y	N	?	Bad
Y	N	?	Intelligent
Y	N	?	Poor planner
Y	N	?	Around when needed
Y	N	?	Lazy

#### Job in General

Y	N	?	Pleasant
Y	N	?	Bad
Y	N	?	Ideal
Y	N	?	Waste of time
Y	N	?	Good
Y	N	?	Undesirable
Y	N	?	Worthwhile
Y	N	?	Worse than most
Y	N	?	Acceptable
Y	N	?	Superior
Y	N	?	Better than most
Y	N	?	Disagreeable
Y	N	?	Makes me content
Y	N	?	Inadequate
Y	N	?	Excellent
Y	N	?	Rotten
Y	N	?	Enjoyable
Y	N	?	Poor

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